

## Trustees of the Robinson Fund

The Robinson Fund is an Exeter charitable trust whose citizens elect its seven members. The funds were given to the Town in 1853 by the will of William Robinson, an Exeter native who attended Phillips Exeter Academy and for whose sister had no similar educational facility in the area. The will specified that the funds be for “the only and sole instruction of females...all other things being equal, always to give preference to the poor and the orphan”. In 1869, the newly-built Robinson Female Seminary opened its doors to females from the Exeter area.

Seven elected Trustees oversee the invested funds. Earnings are used to annually award up to four-year scholarships to Exeter High School graduating seniors going on to college or trade school based on financial need, grades and community participation. Trustees also occasionally fund grants for special projects as proposed by teachers and administrations, for example the William Robinson Ropes Course located at the Cooperative Middle School in Stratham.

From 1869 until 1955, Robinson Seminary was the only public school in Exeter to serve post-elementary females (males attended the Tuck High School). In 1954 the School District passed a bond issue to build an addition to the Tuck School. The first co-educational class graduated from Exeter High School in 1956. A fire in 1961 destroyed the Seminary building. The Lincoln Street Elementary School and related playgrounds now occupy the site.

Four of the current Robinson Fund Trustees attended the Seminary; two are graduates and two attended the Seminary but graduated from the then new co-ed Exeter High School.

In the early 1990's, to avoid discrimination on the basis of gender, the Trustees petitioned the County Probate Court. In 1996 the court issued a decree that discontinued the existing income distribution and established a new Trust purpose: “...to create a fund to provide opportunities to enrich and enhance the educational experience of post-elementary age individuals within the area served by the Exeter Region Cooperative School District, through the development of programs, scholarships and grants.” Following this new decree Trustees awarded the first Robinson Fund Scholarships to graduating seniors of the Exeter Region Cooperative School District in June 1998.

Member	Term	Member	Term
Peter Smith, President	2015	Joan Smart	2020
Joanna Pellerin, Vice President	2021	Judith Churchill	2016
Patricia Qualter, Treasurer	2017	Barbara Taylor Gagne	2018
Harry B. Thayer III, Secretary	2019		

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